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December 17, 2007

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to request that you delay moving forward tomorrow concerning the matter of relaxing our nation's broadcast ownership rules. During the last few years, I have followed closely the Federal Communications Commission's work to examine the public interest limits on media ownership. I have been an outspoken opponent of unfettered media consolidation that does not serve the public interest, and I have expressed concern on numerous occasions that the promotion of minority media ownership, as required by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, is being sacrificed in favor of permitting a small handful of large corporate owners to purchase more media properties in our communities.

I believe the Commission must first establish an appropriate record of study and recommendations for promoting minority ownership before considering any changes to our nation's broadcast ownership rules. It is my understanding that you agreed to create a task force for this very purpose, which is yet another reason not to continue with the ownership proceeding tomorrow.

Moreover, your proposal to relax the newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership ban would actually place minority ownership in greater jeopardy. The current crisis in minority ownership is directly tied to decisions made throughout the years by the FCC that have resulted in greater media consolidation. If the FCC proceeds once again without examining the impact of its pro-consolidation policies on minority owners, I believe the problem will continue to get worse.

Two recent independent studies that examined the state of minority TV and radio ownership support this conclusion. These two studies demonstrate that consolidation is harmful to African American broadcast owners, finding that a minority broadcast owner is less likely to operate a broadcast station in more concentrated markets. These studies also find that the FCC

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Page 2
December 17, 2007

has no firm understanding as to how many broadcast stations are actually owned by people of color because the Commission has never in its history conducted an accurate census on minority ownership.

I am also concerned by the FCC's apparent inability to produce an accurate count on the number of minority owners. One study recently released by the FCC failed to identify 69 percent of minority broadcast owners. Economists hired by the Commission on another study to examine minority ownership reported: "The data currently being collected by the FCC is extremely crude and subject to a large enough degree of measurement error to render it essentially useless for any serious analysis."

I believe that the FCC must not move forward with issuing new rules until it creates an independent task force that is empowered to conduct an accurate count on minority ownership and to examine the impact of consolidation on minority owners. I, therefore, urge you to delay tomorrow's proceeding.

Sincerely,



John Conyers, Jr.
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Lamar Smith
The Honorable Michael J. Copps
The Honorable Jonathan S. Adelstein
The Honorable Deborah Taylor Tate
The Honorable Robert M. McDowell